

This passage is an excerpt
from a book.

WHY NEW HAMPSHIRE?

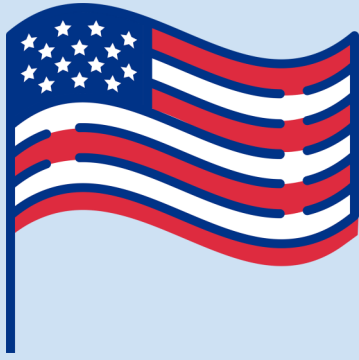
Those of us who live in New Hampshire take the presidential primary for granted, a sort of birthright which we don't pay much attention to until every third year of our existence. Being first hardly explains its consistent appeal to candidates and the media. More likely, it's our unlimited enthusiasm for politics, the fact that we prefer handshakes and voting booths to political polling, and because it remains the quickest, easiest, least expensive and most effective place to start the presidential contest.

The primary was born not in an attempt to be first, and not for any economic benefit to the state, but simply to give more of its citizens a chance to be heard. It would later become first-in-the-nation, as other states either moved to later dates in the calendar or reverted back to a caucus format. Today it has become an event of national significance, although its reason for begin has not changed one bit. This is what the New Hampshire primary was meant to be: Let the people decide.

But there's a lot more to it than that. It's fun. It's an adventure. It's enlightening. It's informative. It's one of a kind. It has a history all of its own. Granted, it's special to Granite Staters. Yet the world participates with the TV sound bite and the Internet. Presidential candidates may not shake your hand or come into your living room, but you don't have to live here to enjoy such a sensory experience offered nowhere else. Just turn on your television and participate in it with us.

It's fun—you meet so many luminaries right up close, be they journalists or public figures. You observe their demeanor. Do you like their looks? How are their manners and behavior? Would you want them in your home? The so-called "fringe" or lesser-known candidates are sometimes a circus with strange and often eccentric ways of presenting themselves. Anything for publicity.





It's enlightening—*New York Times* journalist Phil Rosenthal confided that it can also be an experience for those who might otherwise attend the World Series, The Final Four or the Super Bowl. For the past several primaries, Phil and two or three friends have come here at the height of the season, not as reporters, rather as political junkies, just to enjoy what's going on. "It's the run for the White House as a spectator sport, politics as performance art. All the passion and excitement of campaigning—the part that's filtered out by the

world-weary, subjective news coverage—comes alive as we shiver in the cold or sweat in the back of an overheated Legion hall."

It's informative—whatever the issue, those who choose to run better have an answer and an answer as good or better than the competition. Staged debates bring out all sides. Better yet, there's also the face-to-face opportunity for the voter to single out the candidate of personal choice, and to applaud or condemn statements made. There's an unbounded fountain of knowledge on limitless subjects for a quick education on all matters relating to government. The participants give us all of this free of charge.

It has a history—for over three-quarters of a century we've constantly honed the process of adapting to changing times. Our conduct of the primary has been smooth, satisfying all concerned and serving the nation well. Never has there been scandal, corruption or questions of ballot count. Nor has any other state a better long-standing record of citizen turnout on primary day.

It gets back to the fact that we're a small state, otherwise frequently unnoticed, but every four years when national elections roll around this is the place to be. This is where it all starts and sometimes finishes. Adam Nagourney writing in the *New York Times* sums it up when he says New Hampshire, "is the last remaining spot in the nation where a regular citizen can shake hands and converse with someone who might very well be the next president of the United States."

Notice & Wonder

- Take note of any words you don't know and look them up in a dictionary.
- What are some of the advantages of the New Hampshire primary?
- The authors don't list any disadvantages of the New Hampshire primary. Can you think of any?